

Is the Future of Recreation and Wellness, Medical?

By *Contributing Author* on May 11, 2017

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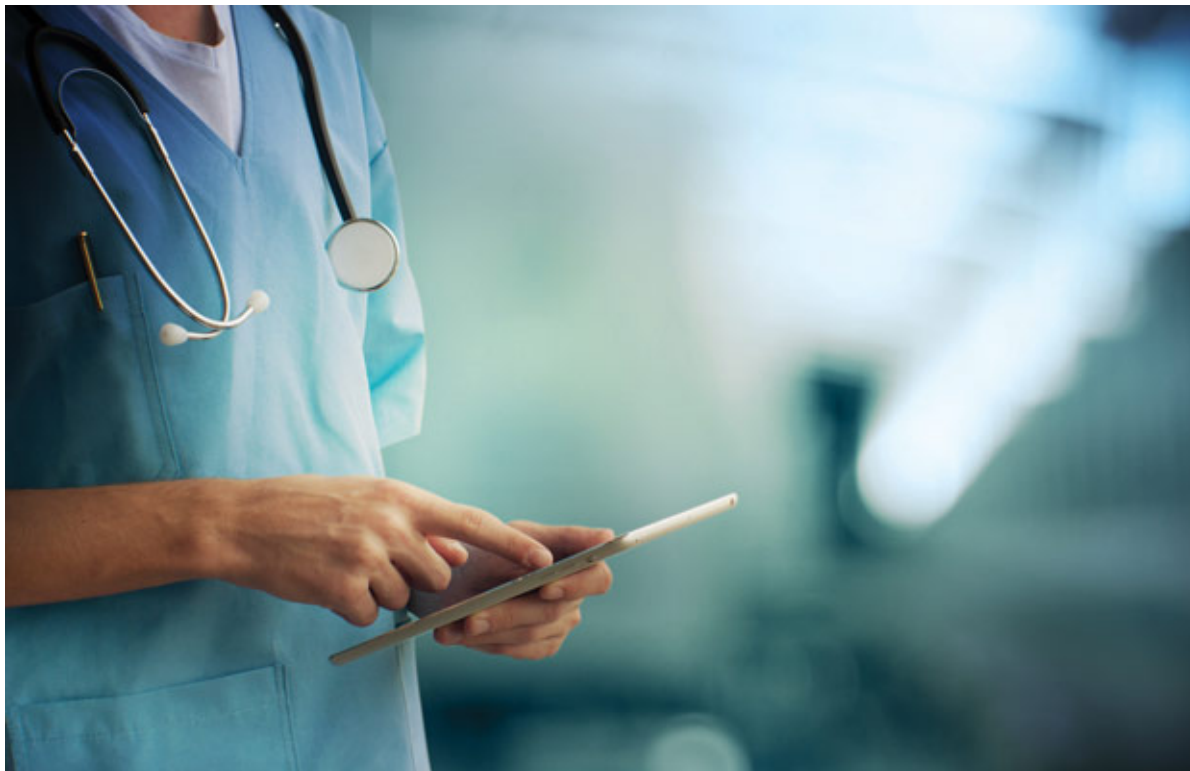


IMAGE BY SHUTTERSTOCK.

There is a growing trend to add Health and Human Services into the Recreation Center. Understandably, recreation directors see a partnership that might allow them to get a recreation center, sooner. Administrations are looking at it as a holistic approach to wellness, but what questions should you be asking to make sure it's the right fit for your school?

Most students use the recreation center to work out, play intramurals, meet friends and generally partake in a healthy environment. For years, we have been designing facilities that create more opportunities for students during their down time. So, what are some of the impacts you must consider when deciding to integrate health services into your recreation center?

The most important part is understanding the role health services plays on your campus, and how the students use it. If they use it for predominately well care, then there are some great symbiotic relationships between recreation and well care. These programs include nutrition, weight loss, cholesterol monitoring, cardiovascular conditioning and relaxation or meditation.

However, if most of your students use it when they are sick, then there are some key questions you need to answer before you incorporate it.

How will you separate those who are contagious from those who are healthy? Because of the number of people living in close quarters, it is easy to see how susceptible a school can be to an illness. Once a stomach flu starts circulating, door handles, elevator buttons, restrooms, etc. all become places to transfer germs. Because of this we recommend keeping the entrances separate, to minimize healthy people inadvertently getting sick.

What type of cleaning services do you have? Recreation Centers and Health Services don't necessarily have the same cleaning programs and frequencies. Operationally, you will need to plan for this. Architecturally, you want a design that makes it as simple as possible.

Operational Relationships: There needs to be a definitive plan for what programs in recreation should have adjacencies to Health Services, and why. The why is important so that your design team understands the adjacencies and design areas to support them.

Privacy: Recreation Centers are places where students want to see and be seen; they accentuate the community environment. When students are sick or dealing with other health issues, they don't typically desire to interact with the larger student body. Understanding this is important to making it comfortable for them to use both sides of the facility. This requires understanding different entrance sequences for different users.

Emergency Ambulance: In the event someone is in need of urgent care, you will need to plan for a way to get them to an ambulance, preferably not back through the front doors.

Integrating Health Services isn't like adding a studio or a new program element. Because its needs are very specific and different from recreation, a school should understand all the benefits and challenges. After that, proper planning will enable the most successful integration for the school and the students.

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